Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library
BL263 .M442
Matthews, Walter Robert, 1881-197MAIN
God and evolution.
3 9967 00079 7618

BL
263
M442

ACCESSION NUMBER 56173 SHELF NUMBER B 818

The Virginia Library

McCormick
Theological Seminary
of the
Presbyterian Church, Chicago
825 Belden Avenue

From

Received JULY 1926

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_C0-CBU-944

THE LIVERPOOL DIOCESAN BOARD OF DIVINITY PUBLICATIONS

LIVERPOOL DIOCESAN BOARD OF DIVINITY PUBLICATIONS.

New Series. Crown 8vo.

CHURCH MUSIC

By Sir W. H. HADOW, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University. 2s. 6d. net.

GOD AND EVOLUTION

By the Rev. W. R. MATTHEWS, D.D., Dean of King's College, London.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION

By the Rev. W. R. MATTHEWS, D.D. 3s. net.

SCIENCE AND CREATION:

The Christian Interpretation.

By the Most Rev. CHARLES F. D'ARCY, D.D., Archbishop of Armagh. 3s. 6d. net.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.

LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO, BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS.

GOD AND EVOLUTION

BY

W. R. MATTHEWS, M.A., D.D.

CHAPLAIN TO THE KING
DEAN OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

McCORMICK THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY LIBRARY,
CHICAGO

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4
NEW YORK, TORONTO
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS
1926

Made in Great Britain

263
M44

PREFACE

THE three lectures which are printed in this little volume were delivered in Liverpool under the auspices of the Liverpool Board of Divinity, and the main contentions in them were presented in another and perhaps more "popular" form in some Advent lectures in Westminster Abbey. The subject is one which would require a greatly extended treatment if anything like an exhaustive discussion of its problems were attempted, and I am very acutely conscious of the ragged edges which have been left in the exposition. The primary object of the lectures was to indicate a line of thought which delivers us from the suggestion, constantly made, that the evolutionary view of nature is hostile to belief in a transcendent God. There are really two principal stages in this argument: (*a*) that evolution must be conceived as "emergent," (*b*) that "emergence," when thought out, leads us to transcendent

56173

teleology. It was also in my mind to draw the attention of Christian thinkers to the urgent need of presenting the doctrines of our faith in the setting of evolutionary ideas. The short discussion which will be found at the end of the third lecture is intended to be nothing more than an indication of the problems which arise and of the way in which a solution may be found. Obviously the most urgent question for Christian theology is the restatement of the doctrine of the Incarnation in the light of evolution, but limitations of time and space have prevented me from touching on it here.

The second volume of Prof. Lloyd Morgan's Gifford Lectures, *Life, Mind and Spirit*, was not published in time to allow more than a passing reference. I should like to take this opportunity of urging readers who are interested in these matters to refer to the completion of Lloyd Morgan's important work, and to follow his application of the theory of "emergent evolution" to ultimate issues. The account which has been given here of Prof. Alexander's views is necessarily sketchy, though, I hope, not

unjust. The remarks upon them are largely critical, but I cannot allow the occasion to pass without some expression of admiration for the constructive power and reverent spirit which are so abundantly displayed in his great work, *Space, Time and Deity*.

W. R. M.

KING'S COLLEGE,
LONDON.

CONTENTS

LECTURE I

PAGE

THE IDEA OF EVOLUTION - - - - 1

LECTURE II

THE RELIGION OF EVOLUTION - - - 26

LECTURE III

EVOLUTION AND GOD - - - 42

McCORMICK THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY LIBRARY,
CHICAGO

LECTURE I

THE IDEA OF EVOLUTION

We shall all agree that the leading conceptions and beliefs of religion cannot be entirely unaffected by the advance of knowledge. Though we may believe that in the Christian revelation we have a deposit of truth which stands unchanged through the ages it is certainly necessary to relate the ideas of theology with the modern mind. This necessity can be recognized without committing ourselves to any programme of "modernism," for even if we are confident that the traditional forms of religious thought and teaching must remain unaltered, it will be a principal part of the work of an evangelist to show that they are not contradicted by the truths which have been disclosed to the men of our generation. In these lectures I shall attempt to consider one idea which has penetrated very deeply into the modern mind and

colours all our thinking—the idea of evolution. No one will question that an evolutionary standpoint is the presupposition of nearly all our scientific research ; but the idea is far more than a peculiar possession of experts. It has taken firm hold of the general mind for which, it is to be feared, it is often little more than a vague notion or even only a phrase which covers ignorance and inhibits thought. As education improves, however, the catchword " evolution " will take on a more definite meaning and we shall be confronted with a population which has learnt to take as a matter of course an intelligently evolutionary view of the world. It is alleged by many writers, not only the prejudiced contributors to the secularist press, that an evolutionary view of the world is consistent with Christian Theism. We are told that the new conception of the universe must lead either to the abandonment of the belief in God altogether or else to such a drastic revision of our idea of God that scarcely anything will be left of the traditional Christian theology. This is the problem which we shall consider; and it is perhaps scarcely

necessary to observe that what we are to think about has little immediate connexion with the interpretation of Genesis, about which I shall say nothing. We are grappling with a deeper question : nothing less than the right of any form of Christian belief to exist in the modern world.

The subject naturally falls into three divisions. We must consider in this lecture the precise meaning of evolution both as a scientific theory and as a philosophical principle. We shall then be led to discuss what we may call " evolutionary religions " and to criticize those substitutes for historical Christianity which profess to be founded on a scientific view of the world. That will bring us in our third lecture to a direct discussion of some difficulties concerning the nature of God and His relation to the world which are raised by the theory of evolution.

The present writer must disclaim special knowledge of any science except psychology, but it is open to any intelligent person to form an opinion of the general tendency of scientific thought, and material has been provided for us

in a convenient form by the collection of essays by experts recently published under the title "Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge" to which work this lecture is greatly indebted.

The meaning of the word Evolution is not so easy to define as is often supposed, and we must be prepared at the outset to find that it covers more than one conception. This will not matter if we are careful to keep these various meanings distinct. For a definition in the most general terms we may refer to Prof. Lloyd Morgan. "We live in a world in which there seems to be an orderly sequence of events. It is the business of science, and of a philosophy which keeps in touch with science, to describe the course of events in this or that instance of their occurrence, and to discover the plan on which they proceed. Evolution, in the broad sense of the word, is the name we give to the comprehensive plan of sequence in all natural events."* This definition is probably too broad to be of much use. It might describe the conviction of all rational persons who have risen above the

* *Emergent Evolution*, p. 1.

level of the grossest superstition, for all such persons certainly believe that there is an "orderly sequence in events" though it would be straining language to suggest that they have all been evolutionists. We may better approach the essential meaning of evolution if we think of it as primarily concerned with kinds, species, and types of existing things. It is a fact of experience and common sense that the world contains things, animate and inanimate, which fall into distinct classes. The question then may arise whether these classes have always been distinct and whether they are fixed in their nature or to some extent fluid. The evolutionary doctrine denies the fixity of species and holds that one has developed out of others and that a further development is still possible. In general it holds that the higher and more complex forms have developed out of lower and simpler ones by a continuous and intelligible process. In contrast to the evolutionary doctrine in this wide sense there stands the view that forms, species, and kinds are not fluid but fixed. This latter doctrine is most familiar to us in connexion

with the older Christian teaching of a special creation, the view that each separate species owes its origin to a distinct creative act. But there is no necessary connexion between such a conception of creation and belief in the fixity of species, and the latter opinion might quite well be held by an atheistic philosopher.

The speculation that species are not fixed is so obvious that it is not surprising to find it put forward by ancient thinkers such as Anaximander and Empedocles. There was, however, no evidence available in support of it in those days and the evolutionary view remained a mere speculation. Evolution entered upon its career as a dominating concept with Darwin's publication of the "Origin of Species" in 1859. Now for the first time it became a scientific theory to explain a definite set of facts. The achievement of Darwin is really twofold. He and A. R. Wallace, supported by Thomas Huxley, marshalled the evidence for the interrelation of species in a manner which could not fail to convince any impartial person that the separation of one species from another was not so absolute as had

been supposed by common sense. But their most important contribution was the suggestion of a general cause for the origin of species. This is of course the famous theory of "natural selection." The pressure of the environment and the consequent struggle for existence eliminates the type not well adapted to the circumstances into which they are born, and favours the survival and the multiplication of those which are better adapted. The struggle for existence acts as a selective agency. Darwin added sexual selection as a minor factor in evolution to explain some characteristics which, he thought, could not be accounted for by natural selection alone. In this he was not followed by Wallace. Darwin, it must be observed, did not profess to account for the fact of variation. It was accepted by him as a fact. His theory explains why, when they are produced, some variations persist and by accumulation lead to the emergence of a new species while others do not persist. We must observe too, that Darwin did not reject the factors on which Lamarck, his predecessor in the application of

evolutionary conceptions to biology, had chiefly relied—the influence of striving, whether conscious or unconscious, and the transmission of acquired characteristics.

The Darwinian theory of evolution was developed in a rigorous and dogmatic manner by biologists who followed. The so-called Neo-Darwinian theory rejects all factors in evolution except that of natural selection and in particular denies the possibility of any transmission of acquired characteristics. The resultant view has been expressed in the phrase "the continuity of the germ-plasm" and is admirably summed up in the words of Dr. McDougall, "The reproductive cell of any organism is derived by simple fission from the similar cell of its parent and is not in any true sense a product of the complex organism by which it is carried." "The developed complex body of the organism is merely a vehicle by means of which the germ-plasm is sheltered, fed and allowed to multiply and perpetuate itself from generation to generation."* Clearly enough such a view of

* McDougall, in *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, p. 328.

evolution would exclude any influence of intelligent purpose upon the course of development and the progress of life through its various forms would have to be regarded as determined by mechanical forces.

Moreover, the principle of natural selection may, when thus generalized, be extended to cover the inorganic world, and the hypothesis may be accepted that even the chemical elements have evolved by this means from some original stuff. Thus the theory of natural selection has become, in the hands of theorists more ruthless and less cautious than Darwin, the basis of a "naturalistic" conception of the world indistinguishable in its results from materialism. To quote Dr. McDougall again, "The course of evolution, both organic and inorganic, has been a mechanical process, a process strictly determined and, in principle, strictly predictable according to the laws of thermo dynamics."*

The conception of evolution which Neo-Darwinianism suggests has recently been called in question on more than one

* op. cit. p. 328.

purely scientific ground. Perhaps the most serious challenge to it from within the circle of the sciences has been the revival of "vitalistic" theories of biology, two of which are represented by Prof. Driesch and Dr. J. S. Haldane. These "vitalistic" views differ very much from one another, but they have this common feature that they deny the possibility of understanding life in terms of mechanism. But even if we leave on one side this controversy, which concerns the territory where biology and philosophy meet, we must notice that considerations of a more exclusively scientific character are now disturbing the serenity of the "naturalistic" version of evolution. Four at least of these may be noted :

(*a*) The transmission of acquired characteristics, which it is a corner-stone of Neo-Darwinianism to deny, is now stoutly maintained by many biologists on the ground of observation and experiment. The controversy is still raging and investigations are still proceeding, but it is at least certain that anyone who holds the view that acquired characteristics cannot be transmitted must now hold it as a dogma or

a working hypothesis, not as an ascertained fact.

(*b*) There appears to be a weakening of the confidence with which the conception of evolution is applied to the inorganic world. In a remarkable essay Prof. Soddy has drawn attention to the danger of transferring an hypothesis which has proved fruitful in the sphere of life to a sphere of existence where the conditions are different. To speak of evolution in the chemical elements is, he thinks, to be near the fallacy of anthropomorphism. He has pointed out further that what we know from experience is not the evolution of elements with a more complex atomic structure but the devolution of the more complex forms of matter into the less complex. When we suppose that the more simple must have come first in time we are perhaps illegitimately assuming that the natural order of thought is also the order of existence.*

(*c*) It is remarkable that the genealogical trees of evolutionary descent which were so confidently displayed

* *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, pp. 401 ff.

but a little time ago are now the subject of grave question and it is likely that many of them have no more correspondence to fact than those of American millionaires which, it is alleged, frequently represent a pious possibility rather than a rigid statement of historical truth.

We may quote the opinion of Dr. F. O. Bower : " Early post-Darwinian systematists optimistically thought that by using the data already at hand it might be possible to construct a natural system which would truly represent evolutionary lines, connected so as to form a ' genealogical tree.' There is at the present time a marked revulsion from that hopeful attitude. Many doubt whether, for the kingdom of plants at least, there was ever a single trunk or common source for all. Others assert more definitely that there was not, and that such evolutionary lines as comparative morphology may trace must always vanish downwards, as they do to-day, in uncharted mist ; but it is undeniable that their characters do in a measure converge before they finally disappear in unattached or ' blind ' ends."*

* Dr. F. O. Bower, op. cit., p. 163.

(*d*) The advent of the new science of psychology into the discussion promises to have a profound effect upon the conception of evolution. The data of this science, mental phenomena, can have only an ambiguous status on a merely naturalistic theory of evolution. Mind must be regarded as of the nature of a mere "phosphorescent glow" appearing at points in the development of matter. This is a position with which psychology cannot be content, and though it has welcomed the idea that mind is in evolution, it will need a different version of evolution. The importance of this has perhaps not yet been fully realized, but the result is clear enough. The physical sciences naturally tend to interpret evolution in the terms which to them are most simple and most comprehensible and hence to lean to a materialistic version; psychology, however, starts, so to speak, from the other end, and its inevitable tendency is not to extrude mind as far as possible from the earlier stages of evolution but to find traces of it as low down as possible—to read the story in its own language. This process is already

being accomplished, though the results so far are not great; but it may be predicted with certainty that the more certainly psychology establishes its claim to be an independent science the more certainly it will transform the whole conception of evolution.

We must now turn from this brief survey of the present position of evolution as a scientific theory to the writers who are making use of it as a philosophical principle. A scientific theory is essentially different from a philosophical concept in that it makes no claim to be of universal validity. It is concerned with the phenomena in reference to which it has been put forward, and though of course an hypothesis found to work in one sphere may often be discovered to be applicable to others, a scientific hypothesis as such does not pretend to deal with the universe as a whole. A philosophical concept, on the other hand, does claim to be true of reality as such and to furnish a clue to the interpretation of the whole range of existence. The "naturalistic" forms of evolutionary doctrine to which we have referred above are plainly philosophical

in character rather than scientific, since they use the evolutionary hypothesis as a universal solvent of the problems of being. Too often, however, their exponents have advanced the illegitimate pretension to be talking science when in reality they were retailing highly disputable metaphysics.

The present generation has seen the rise of a group of thinkers who are in the full sense evolutionary philosophers. Since the Victorian era when Herbert Spencer produced the Synthetic Philosophy based upon the conception of evolution as an all-embracing formula in the terms of passage "from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity" the evolutionary philosophy has moved forward and the real problems which confront it have stood out more clearly than they ever did in the comprehensive but somewhat woolly intelligence of the nineteenth-century sage. These two problems are closely related—that of newness and that of value. It is plainly impossible to deny that in fact evolution means the production of new types of being which are wholly unpredictable in the present state of our knowledge and

which cannot be resolved into more complex arrangements of earlier and simpler forms of being. To speak only in the most general terms, a living being is something different from a chemical compound, and the mind of the philosopher who discusses evolution is not wholly analogous to the type of existence exemplified by an oyster. Nor, again, can we evade the problem of value. No one really doubts that the human person is higher in the scale of value than other animals and still more than inanimate beings. Any satisfactory philosophy of evolution must give some account of value. A suggestion which has been made from the standpoint of "naturalistic" theories of evolution is that the "higher" types of being can be "explained" in terms of the lower by regarding value as equivalent to complexity. Those beings which we put towards the top of our human scale of values are really the more complex structures. But it does not need much reflection to discover that complexity as such has no value. On the contrary, in itself complexity is a disadvantage. No one would prefer a more complex machine

to a simpler one if both were equally efficient. Value has to do with quality of life, and though higher life-quality may be associated in fact with complexity of structure it is a mere confusion of thought to identify them.

The appearance of new values within the process of evolution does not, of course, offer any difficulty in principle to a Theistic view of the world. It may not be easy to say why there should be any process of development at all—though this is not beyond conjecture—but once we have admitted the fact of development and also that development is not self-explanatory, we can account for the upward movement in evolution as the progressive realization of a Divine purpose.

We are, however, confronted at the present time by evolutionary philosophies which are unwilling to admit the conception of a transcendent God while at the same time repudiating the fallacies of materialism or naturalism. We must now proceed to consider philosophies of development which uphold a spiritual or at least a non-material view of the universe

but do not believe in God in the Christian sense.

No treatment of this subject, however brief, can omit entirely the name of Bergson. The brilliance of his writing no less than the originality of his thought has made the idea of "creative evolution" familiar to most educated people. I shall not attempt here to sum up his theory. It will be sufficient to remind you that for him Duration is reality. When we are dealing with evolution this Duration may be thought of as an *élan vital* which is continually pushing forward to the achievement of greater freedom. The forms which the evolutionary process throws up are the effects of this immanent life-force. From one point of view the life-force is opposed by matter, and its adventure consists in the incessant struggle to subdue the material to the purposes of life or spirit—to make it the instrument of freedom. But we must not interpret Bergson as intending to maintain a genuine dualism. Matter is not an independent and alien "stuff," though it has that appearance; in reality it is nothing more than the retardation of the life-impulse.

The theory which Bergson presents to us is very far removed from materialism. It is a theory of continuous creation by immanent life. It is also, in a measure, a teleological view of evolution, since the urge which creates the world has an end, freedom ; but it is not a thorough-going teleological conception, since it is opposed to the belief that development is the working out of a transcendent purpose. That view, which Bergson described as "Radical Finalism," would in his opinion be as fatal to the possibility of freedom as the blankest materialism.

I would, however, more particularly direct your attention to the work of two English thinkers who have produced philosophies of evolution not adorned perhaps with that eloquence which charms us in *l'Evolution Créatrice* but characterized by that sobriety and reverence for fact which we like to think is peculiarly English. Prof. S. Alexander and Prof. Lloyd Morgan are writers whose scientific and philosophical attainments would have made their names familiar to all cultivated people in any country but England. The work of the

former, *Space, Time and Deity*, is the most massive piece of constructive thinking which has been produced in this country for many years, and Lloyd Morgan's *Emergent Evolution* is scarcely less important. I am writing before the appearance of the second volume of Lloyd Morgan's book but I have had the advantage of reading the preface. I wish to make it clear at the outset that, though there is a general agreement between these two writers in their treatment of evolution, their final conclusions are not the same. Lloyd Morgan is led to a definite Theism. "There is no disjunctive antithesis between evolutionary progress and divine purpose. The question, Is there one or the other? has no meaning if there always be one *with* the other."* What Alexander's view is we shall see later. The two philosophers agree, however, as we have said, in their treatment of evolution. Both adopt the theory of "emergent evolution." "Under what I call emergent evolution stress is laid on the incoming of the new.

* *Life, Mind and Spirit*, p. ix.

Salient examples are afforded in the advent of life, in the advent of mind and in the advent of reflective thought."* But the "incoming of the new" is not, on this theory, to be explained by any transcendent or external power. Full weight must be given to the scientific point of view with its insistence on continuity. "Not only atoms and molecules but organisms and minds are susceptible of treatment by scientific methods fundamentally of like kind: all belong to one tissue of events; all exemplify one foundational plan." "The advent of novelty of any kind is loyally to be accepted wherever it is found without invoking any extra-natural power through the efficient agency of which the observed facts may be explained."† Prof. Alexander has given us a memorable phrase to describe the attitude of mind with which "emergents" should be accepted—"natural piety."

It is important to notice that the theory of emergent evolution differs from vitalism and from ordinary Theism. It will admit

* Lloyd Morgan, *Emergent Evolution*, p. 1.
† Lloyd Morgan, op. cit., p. 2.

no insertion of an alien influence or power into physico-chemical evolution and resorts to no intervention, divine or otherwise, *ab extra*, to account for the new existences which evolution brings. But it is equally opposed to any mechanistic view of evolution. The adherents of materialistic theories of evolution ignore a distinction which to these thinkers seems fundamentally important, that between "resultants" and "emergents." There are some effects which plainly fall under the former designation. They are simply the additive result of the pre-existent conditions. Thus if we mix sand and sugar together the qualities of the product could easily be foreseen by one who had never tried the experiment before, since they are compounded out of those of the constituent substances. A chemical compound, however, may be entirely different in qualities from the elements out of which it is built, and prior to its manufacture could not be accurately predicted. There is, then, in this latter kind of effect a characteristic which is not present in the former—that of emergence. The root of the materialist's error is failure

to make this distinction, and hence arises the attempt to regard the process of evolution as merely a series of resultants. The theory of emergent evolution is essentially a protest against this.

We must mention, before we leave these general outlines of the new philosophy of evolution, the chief points where Lloyd Morgan and Alexander diverge. They differ about the starting-point and about the conclusion. While Lloyd Morgan is content to accept, at least provisionally, the real existence of the physical world as disclosed by science, Alexander believes that it is possible for thought to penetrate behind even the atom or the electron and envisage the most primitive and simple type of existence. This primordial "stuff" out of which the whole universe is made he calls Space-Time. The simplest form of individual existence is a point-instant, a here-now, and this leads us to conceive the basis of all forms of being as neither space in abstraction from time nor time apart from space, but space and time together as a concrete unity. We have already seen that Lloyd Morgan holds emergent evolution to be at least

compatible with some kind of Theism though not with a theology which would assert divine intervention at particular points in the evolutionary process. The divine activity, if recognized at all, must be thought of as omnipresent. Alexander's views on Deity are very different and will engage our attention in the next lecture.

Perhaps it will be useful to make a brief summary of the positions which this lecture has attempted to suggest :

(*a*) The conception of evolution as an interpretative principle in Biology is not likely to be shaken, though there are very important controversies now proceeding which affect the theory profoundly. In particular, the possibility of the inheritance of acquired characteristics is an open question and considerable issues depend upon its answer. In general, we may say that a purely mechanistic view of evolution appears to be losing ground.

(*b*) There is much thought at the present time which uses evolution as a philosophical principle. A striking feature of current philosophies of evolution is the stress laid on newness and value and the recognition of the failure of naturalistic

systems such as Spencer's to do justice to these facts. The theory of "emergent evolution" marks a new and important departure in thought and challenges us to consider whether evolution so interpreted does not furnish an explanatory principle which renders the belief in a transcendent Deity unnecessary.

LECTURE II

THE RELIGION OF EVOLUTION

No one who is acquainted with the history of Christianity will be surprised that the Gospel should have to compete with rival religions. There has scarcely been any period when the religion of Christ was in undisputed possession of the field even in Europe. An early example of this is to be found in the conflict of the Church with Gnosticism. The latter could plausibly claim to be at once more spiritual and more intellectual than Christianity, to be more fully in harmony with the thought of the day and not less satisfying to the religious needs of men. A situation of this kind exists at the present time. Doubtless there are many competitors. Christian Science, Theosophy, Spiritualism occur to us as the most prominent instances. They impress us with their power because they have some form of organization, the beginnings of a Church.

Nevertheless, a clear-sighted observer would probably not consider any of these to be the most dangerous rival of Christianity, since none of them seems to be grounded on any fundamental tendency of the modern mind. He would give the pre-eminence to a religious movement which has none of the external marks of prosperous propaganda, neither organization nor a coherent body of doctrine. He would signalize the religion of evolution as the most remarkable and that which contains the greatest promise of survival. By the religion of evolution I mean the belief that in evolution itself, or rather in a particular interpretation of it, can be found the satisfaction for the spiritual needs of mankind.

This form of religious belief has at least two of the requisites of successful propaganda—prophets and a philosophy. Two of the most eminent writers of the day have given their talents to its exposition. Mr. H. G. Wells and Mr. Bernard Shaw are certainly religious men, but just as certainly their religion is not Christianity ; it is the religion of evolution. We may observe that both reject

the naturalistic conception of evolution and the preface to *Back to Methuselah* is even excessively vehement in its contempt for the Neo-Darwinians. No one could feel more strongly than Mr. Shaw the need for religion to keep human life sane. He finds the basis for a religion credible by modern men in the belief in an upward movement in evolution with which human beings may co-operate ; he believes that this movement may even conquer matter and time, leading to the practical abolition of death. Mr. Wells gives us a more imaginative presentation of essentially the same theme, a presentation which appears to be coloured by an individual religious experience. For him God is not merely an immanent force or tendency but a person who comes into being in the course of the evolutionary process, emerging from it to be our leader and king. " God comes we know not whence into the conflict of life. He works in men and through men. He is a spirit, a single spirit and a single person ; he has begun and he will never end. He is the immortal part and leader of mankind. He has motives, he has characteristics, and he has

an aim. He is by our poor scales of measurement boundless love, boundless courage, boundless generosity. He is thought and a steadfast will. He is our friend and brother and the light of the world."*

The emotional glow of such passages as this is unmistakable and the language is very like that which a Christian might employ in describing his relation with Christ; but we must not be betrayed into overlooking the vital difference between the doctrine here implied and the Christian conception of God. Mr. Wells' invisible King is in no sense infinite or eternal, though he uses words such as "immortal" and "boundless" in his description. We must suppose, however, that they have a merely honorific sense, for it is clear enough that the God of Mr. Wells' theology has a beginning and indeed he is carefully distinguished from the Veiled Being who is the Infinite and Unknowable source of all being. Religion then, on this view, consists not in a conscious relation with the ultimate Reality of the Universe but in the "identification of the indivi-

* *God the Invisible King*, p. 21.

dual life with the immortal purpose of God."*

There is no arguing with prophets; and we have referred to the writings of these two distinguished authors in order to make clear that the religion we are now considering is no academic curiosity or invention of professors but a creed which is being commended effectually to wide circles of intelligent men. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that no wise Christian would wish simply to find a refutation of the view of the world implied in these utterances. With much he would feel himself in agreement and he would desire that they should be supplemented rather than abandoned. If we wish to see whither the religion of evolution would carry us and the merits and defects of its theology we must turn to the less inspiring but more coherent writings of systematic thinkers. We shall find none more worthy of attention than Prof. Alexander who might almost be called the Aquinas of the religion of evolution.

As we saw in the previous lecture,

* Op. cit., p. 111.

Alexander's theory of emergent evolution conceives the universe as developing out of the "matrix" of Space-Time by a process in which new kinds of existence and new levels of value come into being. From our point of view, however, the most interesting portion of his great work, *Space, Time and Deity*, is that which deals with the religious consciousness. He is very far from dismissing religious experience as mere illusion and perceives that a philosophy is self-condemned which has nothing to say about this persistent aspect of human life. On the other hand, neither he nor Prof. Julian Huxley, who also uses the conception of emergent evolution,* accepts any belief in a personal God or attaches any value to the ordinary arguments for Theism. Even the teleological argument, which might have seemed most likely to win respectful hearing from these thinkers is rejected. There is no teleological movement in the Universe, Alexander assures us, and though indeed we may say that the world works out "so as to produce a plan" we may not say that

* See *Essays of a Biologist.*

it works "according to plan."* Prof. Julian Huxley is even more drastic in his rejection of Theism. "The difficulty," he says, "of understanding the functions of a personal ruler in a universe which the march of knowledge is showing us ever more clearly as self-ordered and self-ordering in every minutest detail is becoming more and more apparent."†

What then, may we ask, does deity mean for Mr. Alexander? In what way does he attempt to meet the religious demands of the human spirit? In order to answer these questions we may observe that there is an element in these philosophies of evolution which has not yet engaged our attention, one moreover which appears rather incidentally in Alexander's exposition, though it plays an important part in his final synthesis and in his reconstruction of religion. This element is that of an inherent tendency towards the production of higher values in the evolving "stuff" of the universe. It appears in the writings of Mr. Huxley and Mr. Alexander under different names

* *Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II, pp. 341ff.
† *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 217.

though it is in essence the same for both. Mr. Huxley speaks of a "direction" in evolution; Mr. Alexander prefers the Latin tongue and calls it "nisus." "There is a nisus in Space-Time which as it has borne its creatures forward through matter and life to mind will bear them forward to some higher level of existence."* The conviction that there is this nisus or direction opens the way to a new interpretation of the idea of God at least for Alexander and possibly for Mr. Julian Huxley, though the present writer must confess his total inability to understand the utterances of the latter on this subject. Deity is the "next highest empirical quality to mind which the universe is engaged in bringing to birth." We cannot know what that quality is though we are "speculatively assured" that there is something higher than mind yet to be produced. "Our human altars are still raised to the unknown God."† Thus deity is no fixed term and has no constant meaning. For any level of existence

* Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 346.
† Op. cit., p. 347.

there is deity—"the next highest empirical quality." The religious attitude of mind is, so to speak, an active consent that God should be born, a conscious co-operation with the nisus in Space-Time towards higher values. "Religion as a sentiment is the sense of outgoing to the whole universe in its process towards the quality of deity."

It remains only to remark that the process is, of course, unending. We may please ourselves by imagining the tendency to produce deity as having run its course and speculate on the nature of a universe which was the body of infinite Deity, but we must not suppose that this state of things exists now or will exist in the future. The progress goes on without limit. I hope it may not sound irreverent to say that, on this view, the world is in unresting pursuit of a deity who does not exist—and never catches up with him.

We have already hinted that the claim made for this type of religious belief that it meets the need of the spiritual life is partially justified. No Christian will wish to deny the immanent nisus towards

higher types of being or minimize the power of the thought that individuals may co-operate with it. The philosophies which we are considering have the merit of insisting upon the reality of the time process and vindicate the importance of temporal events. In this respect at least they are more in harmony with the Christian view of the world than many systems of Absolute Idealism which seem to reduce all that happens to an illusory dance of shadows. But they sacrifice much of equal religious importance in that they can give to the soul of man no absolute—there is no absolute Value of which his own moral and æsthetic judgments are the reflexion, there is no Absolute Reality in which he may rest. The call to heroic and unselfish conflict, the promise of an unending quest, are not the whole of the Christian religious experience, nor, I think, have they ever satisfied by themselves the fully awakened religious consciousness. There is another element, hard to reconcile with them, but certainly not less fundamental. A full religious life contains not only conflict but rest, not only a quest which is unending but

a quest which is assured of its goal. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "I am the Lord ; I change not." "He that eateth this bread shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." This element in the life of the spirit the religion of evolution cannot supply or sustain. We have seen clearly enough that its conception of the Divine is essentially temporal. Deity is life-force, as Bergson would say, or a finite creature of the evolutionary process, according to Mr. Wells, or a stage in evolution, if we follow Professor Alexander, or a direction within the whole development of the world, in Prof. Julian Huxley's opinion. Whichever version we prefer we shall have to confess that, in Alexander's own words, God is "caught in the general movement of Time." The religion of evolution, so long as it remains merely a religion of evolution, can never satisfy the deep desire of the spirit of man to stay itself upon One beyond change, on the Everlasting.

These religious defects correspond to defects of a more intellectual character. We may pass over with a brief reference

the difficulties which inhere in any philosophy which excludes all idea of a supra-temporal Reality. It is obvious that we are left with insoluble problems concerning the end and the beginning. Any account which we can give of a merely temporal universe must be radically imperfect, since the questions What went before? and What came after? can be asked without end. But even if we accept the position and agree not to raise these ultimate perplexities we have still grave cause for dissatisfaction with the theories on which the religion of evolution depends.

The religion of evolution, it may confidently be asserted, is founded on as great an act of faith as any which the Christian doctrine of God requires of us. In all its forms it assumes the belief that there is an upward tendency in evolution, that progress to higher values is a fact, that it will continue indefinitely, and, as most of these theories imply, for ever. If we ask for the evidence in favour of this assumption we shall be surprised at the inadequacy of the reply. It is doubtless true that we can discern

an upward movement in evolution in some portion of the space and time known to us, along with many contrary movements of degeneration. But we must reflect how limited is our observation compared with the possibly infinite extent not known to us. It is surely a precarious inference to deduce from this limited area of experience a dogma about the universe in its whole spatial and temporal existence. But the case is even more desperate than this. In so far as science can deliver a verdict at all on this question it would be against the probability of indefinite progress, and a denial that there can be an unlimited upward movement of any natural system. Let us call Prof. Julian Huxley himself as a witness on this point. "The law under which transformations of energy operate has now been investigated, and it has been established that in every energy-transaction a certain modicum goes to waste as unavailable heat, so that, unless some at present unforeseen change occurs, the last state of the universe, considered as a purely physico-chemical mechanism, will be one of death, of inactivity, with all

matter at a uniform low temperature and the whole stock of energy locked up and unavailable in this sea of tranquillity."* We may hope and try to believe that our universe contains the potentiality of unlimited progress, but it is foolish to pretend that science demonstrates this or even authorizes us to think it probable. If we believe it we do so by an act of faith ; and I am not sure that it is even a rational faith.

We must next consider a little more fully the value of the conception of "emergent" evolution. We have seen that it undoubtedly has great importance, and we have welcomed it as vastly more in harmony with the facts of experience and with our spiritual needs than any merely mechanistic theory ; but we must not allow ourselves to be deceived about its limitations. When we begin to think it out we soon become aware that "emergence" leaves the ultimate problem unsolved. It is a description, not an explanation, the application of a new word, not the attainment of a deeper insight. We must be grateful that the new descriptive

* *Essays of a Biologist*, p. 250.

account of evolution is nearer to the truth of fact than the old, but we cannot accept a description for a reason. Prof. Alexander tells us that we should welcome emergence with " natural piety." Almost any kind of piety is doubtless praiseworthy ; but not the kind which forbids us to ask, Why ? That is the question which inevitably presents itself to our minds. Why does evolution possess this character of emergence ? The theory of emergent evolution has no answer except a repetition of the fact to be explained. With all its difficulties the Christian doctrine of God the Creator has an answer and does attempt to deal with the real problem. We may suspect that " natural piety " is commended to us lest, pushing our questions beyond the appearances of things, we should be led to supernatural piety.

Another perplexity raised by the theory of emergent evolution will be considered more fully in our next lecture but must receive a passing mention here. It is connected with the " nisus " or " direction " in evolution and its relation with teleological conceptions. These thinkers

appear to be asserting a principle which is between mechanism and purpose, since they repudiate both these views of the evolutionary process. We may ask whether in fact such an intermediate concept is intelligible and we shall try to show in the next lecture that there is really no stopping-place short of teleology when once we have set out on the journey from Materialism's City of Destruction.

To sum up : we may say confidently that an evolutionary view of the world is, in its degree, a true one and that the emergent theory of evolution is truer than a mechanistic one. But even emergent evolution is not the whole truth. The demands of the speculative intellect no less than the needs of the religious life forbid us to be satisfied with a merely evolutionary conception of reality. They lead us beyond development and process in time and point to the Eternal.

LECTURE III

EVOLUTION AND GOD

We have now briefly reviewed the philosophies of evolution which are current to-day and have found reasons for thinking that, with all their impressive elaboration and emphasis on newness and value, they leave the mind still asking questions for which there is no answer and the soul with needs for which there is no satisfaction. We will now proceed to consider the Christian conception of God in the light of evolutionary philosophy and attempt to show that it has really been reinforced by the latest developments of thought.

Of all the traditional arguments for Theism the teleological has probably carried most weight with the plain man. When presented in the form of analogy, as by Paley with the illustration of the watch, it has been easily intelligible, and the transition from signs of purposiveness

in creation to an intelligent Creator has seemed obvious. Philosophers, who often pay scant homage to the thoughts of ordinary persons, have treated it with respect. But even in pre-evolutionary periods of thought the argument was not without its critics. Kant rejected it, albeit half-heartedly, on the ground of its anthropomorphism and also on the ground that it would lead only to the idea of an Architect of the Universe who did the best with pre-existing material. What seemed to be a staggering blow was delivered at this time-honoured argument by the Darwinian theory of evolution. Natural selection appeared to be the universal solvent of teleology, since it offered to give a natural explanation of those particular adjustments of which the argument made so much. The human eye, for example, was a favourite instance, but its impressiveness was gravely diminished when it could no longer be thought of as a separate and distinct entity to be accounted for as it stood but rather as the product of a process stretching over a vast lapse of time and going back to the simplest beginning in a rudimentary

sensitiveness to light. It could not now be triumphantly produced as a masterpiece of the great Designer, since it was seen to be the result of the accumulation of a multitude of minute favourable variations. There can be no doubt that the theory of evolution has much weakened the force of the appeal of this most easily comprehended argument for the existence of God. What has really happened, however, is that the question of teleology has been transferred to a wider field. We are confronted with the same problem in a different form. The question now is not are there designed products but is the evolutionary process itself teleological? If we examine attentively the philosophies of evolution which have been occupying our thoughts in these lectures we shall find, I think, that a new teleological argument is emerging of more impressive sweep than the old.

A considerable step has been taken when we have answered the question whether the process of evolution is self-explanatory. Is it completely intelligible as it stands? It is sometimes said, as by Professor Julian Huxley, that the

universe is revealed by science as a self-explanatory system, or more generally that the whole scientific procedure is based upon the assumption, justified by its results, that no agency outside the universe or supernatural is needed to account for any of its characteristics. There is a dangerous ambiguity lurking here in the use of the word "Universe." All rational persons believe that the Universe is, in some sense, self-explanatory, if we mean by the Universe everything which in any manner exists. In that case, of course, the Universe is either self-explanatory or not explicable at all, because there can be nothing which falls outside it. But the point at issue is precisely what is the nature of that universe which is self-explanatory? Is it the universe of the Theist which includes God and His creation or a universe which excludes God?

We have seen the good reasons which have led to the theory of emergent evolution and have noticed the position of those who are content to remain with that as the final word about the world. We found them denying and denouncing

the "naturalistic" view that the process is mechanistic or that the higher is completely explicable in terms of the lower. We found them maintaining that new and more valuable kinds of being emerge in the course of development which could not be known or predicted beforehand. They assert that there is a tendency, whether they call it "nisus" or "direction" or "life-impulse," to produce these superior types. But at the same time they deny that there is anything of the nature of purpose in this movement. In Alexander's phrase it does not work "according to plan" but "so as to produce a plan."

A moment's reflexion will be sufficient to show that this is a highly paradoxical position. We are really offered a surreptitious teleology which is afraid of the word. These thinkers tell us that we cannot have an adequate view of the world unless we recognize in it a tendency to produce higher values. We must not conceive it as a series of "resultants" or as wholly explicable by "efficient causation." But this "tendency to produce values" is just what is commonly meant by tele-

ology. We might define a teleological series of events as one which is not completely accounted for except by reference to its end, which end is, from some point of view at any rate, regarded as having value. It seems, then, that emergent evolution cannot be truly represented as an intermediate position between teleology and mechanism. No intermediate position is really possible : there either is teleological movement in the world or there is not. The choice is between a theory which frankly excludes anything in the nature of purposive tendency from the world and treats it as a pure mechanism and one which admits teleology. Though in words it may be denied, clearly "nisus" and "direction" in evolution are teleology thinly disguised. The hasty conclusion from this to the existence of transcendent mind would, however, be a serious error, for we have to admit that a distinction may be drawn between immanent and transcendent teleology. M. Bergson, for example, surely wiser here than our English philosophers, would admit that his "creative evolution" is in a sense teleological, but he

would altogether deny that there were any grounds for believing in a Creator outside the evolutionary process. We have therefore to consider the possibility that though teleology is true its nature is wholly immanent and hence affords no ground for a teleological argument for the existence of any God such as that postulated by Christian Theism.

No one would, I suppose, wish to deny the usefulness for many purposes of the distinction between immanent and transcendent purposiveness, but I think it may be shown that immanent teleology by itself is not a finally intelligible conception, that in fact here as elsewhere immanence implies transcendence. Let us consider again what is implied in the idea of a teleological series of events. We will avoid the ambiguous word "cause" and try to put the point in the most general terms. At the least a teleological series is one in which the whole series is influenced by the final event, the end. Now consider such a series at any point before the end is reached. There you have an event which is influenced by, which is in some degree what it is because

of, an event which had not yet happened, an event which on the purely immanent view does not in any sense exist. Does it not seem a violent paradox, even a plain contradiction, to hold that what does not exist can influence what does exist? Unless we are prepared to throw over the foundation of all thought and confess that the universe is not intelligible to our minds we shall be forced to the conclusion that the end must in some manner exist before it happens. There is only one hypothesis open to us to make sense of this situation. The only way known to us by which an event can exist before it happens as in the form of a thought in a mind which is itself not one of the events of the series. We may conclude then that immanent teleology implies transcendent teleology, and that, in its turn, implies transcendent thought.

The reader will not, I hope, suppose that this argument is intended to throw doubt upon the legitimacy of the idea of immanent teleology. On the contrary, the conception is valuable and an integral part of the Christian view of the relation of God with the world, which has always

insisted upon the doctrine of the Logos. What is suggested irresistibly by this train of thought is that the Logos doctrine by itself will not offer us a final resting-place. That, in terms of theology, is what the philosophies of emergent evolution propose to us—a reduction of Theism to the doctrine of the Logos. We have seen that the recognition of thought or mind in evolution leads us on to the conception of transcendent Deity, from which the Logos proceeds, the fullness of the Godhead wherein all partial purposes are realized.

Though there seems good reason for believing that evolution has not destroyed the teleological argument but rather reinforced it, and though a merely immanent view of deity seems plainly unsatisfactory even from a purely intellectual standpoint, it would be a grave mistake to assume that the evolutionary view of the world has no contribution to make to our theology or that this revelation of new truth about creation can leave our thought of God unaffected. The evolutionary view of the world has not yet made its influence fully felt in our

religious conceptions. It is desirable that this process should be hastened, for at the present time much Christian teaching has an appearance of standing in opposition to scientific conclusions, which is as unnecessary as it is unfortunate. The permanent values of the Christian faith can be preserved by a theology which welcomes the new insight not only as a challenge but as an opportunity. There is no time now to indicate all the points where modification will be needed ; there is indeed scarcely a doctrine which is not in some degree affected by the modern view of nature and history. It is clear, however, that the central problem is that of the relation of God with the world and particularly the idea of creation. I shall conclude this lecture by a few observations on this subject.

Creation is a belief which Christianity cannot safely abandon, since it is at once the implication and the safeguard of its faith as a transcendent God. It is bound to hold that the system of nature is not self-explanatory but depends throughout on creative intelligence. We have seen that evolution is quite compati-

ble with a belief in creation, but it is not compatible with some of the traditional beliefs about the method of creation. We must always beware of confusing the imaginative setting of a religious idea with the idea itself. Doubtless all conceptions which are to move men to action must be clothed in pictorial images. Truth must be "embodied in a tale." As the mind of the human race moves onward it needs new symbols for its permanent truths. We may suggest, then, that the conception of a beginning in time or of time, which would confine the specifically creative act to the first moment of the world, is no part of the essential idea of creation, as it is certainly hard to reconcile with an evolutionary view of the world. Emergent evolution invites us to conceive God as creating always—now and in the future. If we frankly accept this conclusion we shall find ourselves in possession of a nobler and more hopeful view of God. We may have the vision of life not as the unwinding of a chain or the reading off of decrees written before the foundation of the world, but as a great adventure of

creative will in which we are privileged to co-operate.

There arises in connection with this a question which, though at first sight merely speculative, has in fact important consequences according as we answer it in one way or another. Two possible views seem open to us concerning the mode of creative activity. The most natural and obvious is perhaps to regard it as quite continuous and to conceive the whole evolutionary process, the whole series of events, as an uninterrupted creative activity. Or, again, we may take the view that specifically creative activity appears at turning points or crises in evolution and history, particularly of course in the "emergence" of life, mind and spirit. Historical accuracy should forbid our asserting that one of these opinions is Christian rather than the other, since great Christian thinkers may be quoted on either side, and we may point out that the difference of opinion still continues. Two philosophers who have published their sentiments during the past year take opposite sides. Dr. W. Temple in *Christus Veritas* supports what

we may call the "interventionist" view, while Prof. Lloyd Morgan in his important second volume is equally clear against it. Christian theology has usually distinguished between "creation" and "preservation," between the originating and sustaining activity of God. Schleiermacher in his great work *der Christliche Glaube* has shown very fully that it is extremely difficult to think out this distinction and holds that both creation and preservation are one-sided representations of the ultimate religious truth—the absolute dependence of all things on God.

We must admit that the difficulties pointed out by Schleiermacher are genuine and confess that we are dealing here with an object which is beyond our powers of accurate determination. We cannot so adequately conceive the divine activity as to be able to draw distinctions concerning it which are valid in themselves. We are able to think only of the divine activity as it is in relation to us, and that very imperfectly. When we confine ourselves to this province we can see that there is a value in the distinction, chiefly on two

grounds. First, experience seems to support the distinction drawn by Lloyd Morgan and others between "resultant" and "emergent" events. But if we are Theists, we believe that all events are dependent upon God. At the same time we are naturally led to believe that the difference in the nature of events corresponds to a difference in the manner in which they depend upon God. This would be met by the retention of the two ideas of creation and preservation, "resultant" events being dependent on God's sustaining power, "emergent" events on His creative energy. Secondly, the elimination of the conception of preservation altogether would have an important bearing on our treatment of the problem of evil. If creation were the only concept which we could use in describing God's relation with the world we should hardly be able to escape from the position into which several philosophers of the Cartesian school were forced by the logic of their own position, i.e., holding that the universe is created by God at each moment. This would certainly be the consequence of asserting that there is no

part of the world to which at any time God stands in the relation of preserver and not creator. This view would clearly render the problem of evil insoluble, because we should be committed to the doctrine that every event, including the evil thoughts of the worst man, was the direct result of divine will. There is no escape from the dilemma which would thus arise except by denying either that God always wills the good or that evil is really evil.

The question which we have now opened up is one aspect of a fundamental and probably insoluble problem—the relation of the eternal and the temporal. That it should be beyond our power of complete elucidation is not surprising, since we have in our thinking to use categories which are coloured by, even if not derived from, our successive and time-determined experience. The suggestion that the conception of the Eternal is unnecessary is tempting as a way out of our perplexity. It is made in one form by the "religion of evolution" which invites us in different ways to think of Deity itself as "caught

in the movement of time." Christian faith cannot take this road. To do so would, as we have seen, mean cutting away one essential element in Christian experience and indeed of most developed religion. As Baron von Hügel constantly insisted, it is of the nature of the religious impulse to rise above "successiveness" to "simultaneity." Nor is this need for the conception of the super-temporal Reality confined to that experience which is specifically religious. In the activities of knowing, of moral striving, and of æsthetic creation and appreciation we have the same lifting of the spirit beyond the merely successive in its search for an absolute truth, an absolute beauty and an absolute good.

The Christian idea of God, we may say, in conclusion, is not in contradiction with the theory of evolution. On the contrary, an evolutionary view of nature may form the starting-point of a forcible argument for the existence of a transcendent God. But the Christian view of the world cannot hold that evolution is ultimately true in the sense that the universe as a whole is evolving, or that

God is within the time process. Evolution is true in the sense that process is going on within the whole.

It is far from the intention of these lectures to suggest that there are no unsolved enigmas for the Christian belief about God and the world. We may justly claim that it has an answer to questions which the religion of evolution leaves untouched ; but there are problems which still baffle us when we have adopted Christian Theism as the most reasonable view of the universe. At least we may say of them that they lie where we should expect them to lie, in the nature of the Creator himself, who must ever be to us the Incomprehensible, since fully to understand Him and His purpose would mean that we were ourselves God.

BRISTOL : BURLEIGH LTD., AT THE BURLEIGH PRESS

Date Due

7/8/35			

Library Bureau Cat. no. 1137

56173

BL
263
M442
AUTHOR
Matthews, W.R.
TITLE
God and evolution.

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME
MAR 29 '58	LETTERING LETTERING

1157-A

C0-CBU-944